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**From:** MJ Hughes

**Sent:** 28 April 2009 13:44

**To:** public@standards.x.gsi.gov.uk

**Subject:** Members of Parliament - pay and allowances enquiry

May I make two specific points. One of operational approach, the other of principle.

1. **It is perfectly possible to create a "charge card" system - lots of financial organisations would do for the kudos alone! All expenses should be charged to this. Office and secretarial costs should be handled directly through the Commons without Member involvement.** Travel between Westminster and the Constituency should be covered by a form of "season ticket" provided by all carriers, rail and/or air. Both would provide an automatic audit trail which should be completely transparent.

2. We must accept that MPs have a whole range of abilities which have differing market values. Some could walk into jobs that pay very well, others would have difficulty in finding any long-term paid employment, let alone one with such "perks" and pensions. The only ability they share is that of being "in the right place at the right time". Where the SSRB seem to go wrong is to believe that one can evaluate the different tasks of an MP and give a monetary value to each. Like company remuneration committees, the Salary Review Body members are bound to recommend increases that justify their own income and status. It's called "You scratch my back: I'll scratch yours." The same applies to expenses and allowances. Some Members are dynamic workaholics and "policy wonks", whilst others are absolutely superb constituency MPs and excel on the social services side of their work. Each Member will have different needs. **The only requirement is that they should be supported appropriately to undertake their duties as they interpret them. However, every expense claim should be audited by a non-Parliamentary individual (I suggest you pay a pensioner on below average income to do this) and Members found financially to abuse their position should appear at the bar of the House to explain and apologise for their behaviour.**

Ma. Hughes